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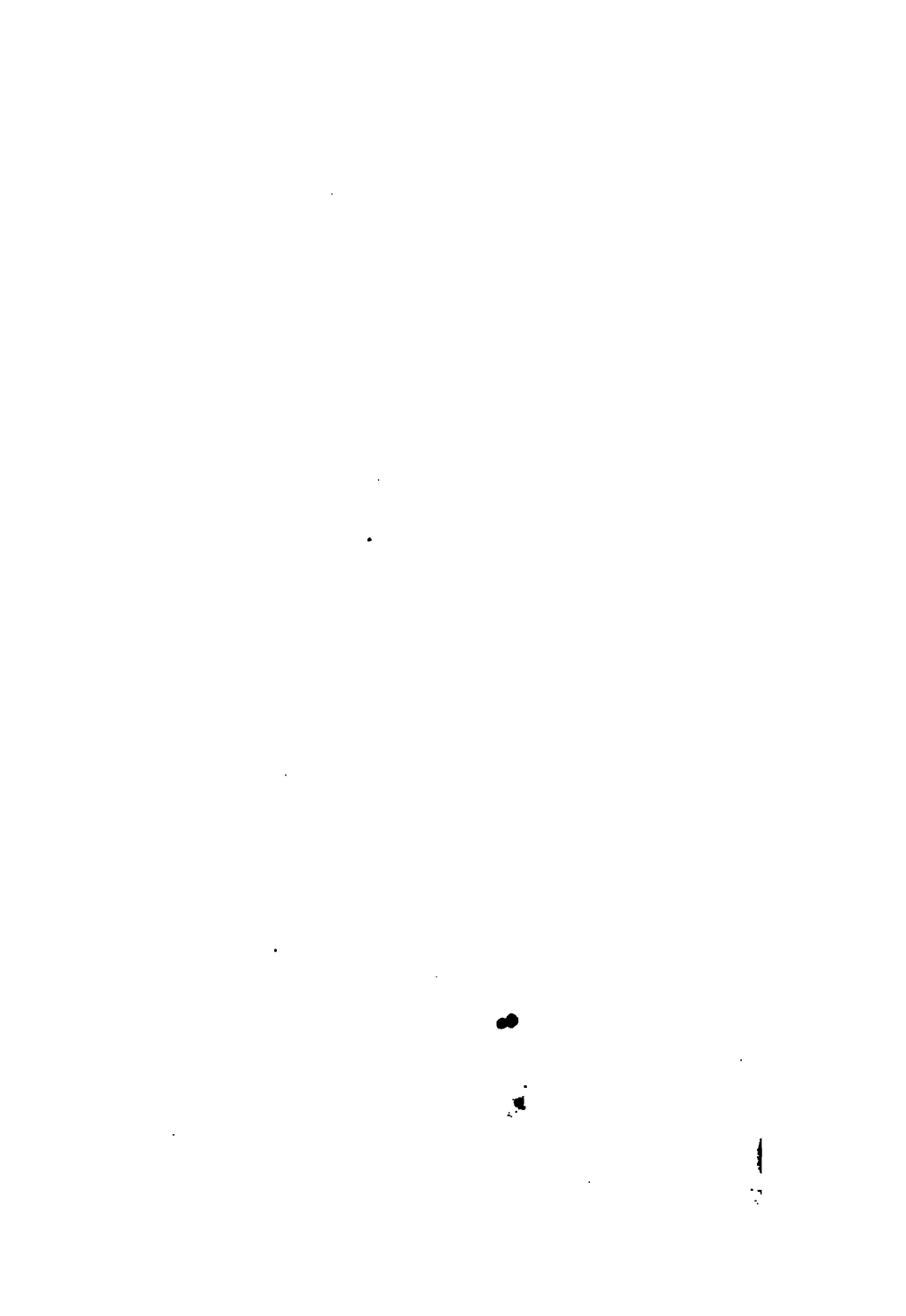


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PASTORAL ADVICE

TO

YOUNG MEN,

PARTICULARLY THOSE IN COUNTRY VILLAGES,

IN

SEVEN SERMONS,

BY THE

REV. EDWARD BERENS, M.A.

OXFORD,

PRINTED BY W. BAXTER,

**FOR J. PARKER; AND J. G. AND F. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH
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SERMON I.

ON THE HABITUAL REMEMBRANCE OF GOD.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

THE minister of a parish must naturally feel anxious for the welfare of every individual committed to his charge; but this anxiety will be felt in an increased degree for such of his flock as are exposed to peculiar danger. This, certainly, is the case with those young men who are just entering the world, and beginning to think—(what they generally think at a period much too early)—that they may now venture to act for themselves, may venture to throw off the control of masters and teachers, and even the salutary restraint of parental authority. Great, indeed, are the dangers to which they thus heedlessly expose themselves. Let me, therefore, intreat such young men, to attend seriously to a few words of advice, dictated by a heartfelt desire to advance your best interests. Consider what I say as the admonition of a *friend*; of one who sincerely wishes you well, and who can have no object in view in thus addressing you but *your* good.

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As the most effectual preservative from the many dangers, to which, at your age, you are exposed, endeavour to comply with the advice of the wise man in the text, to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when ye shall say, I have no pleasure in them.* Try to maintain constantly in your heart a deep sense of the *relation* which you bear to God, and of the *duties* which you consequently owe to him. Try to keep the principal truths and obligations of religion deeply impressed upon your minds.

Remember God as your *Creator*. Consider that you were made by him; and that you owe to him, not only your life, but every comfort which you enjoy. You cannot but acknowledge, that he has a clear and undoubted right to the services of that being which he has himself made. You *belong* to him; and consequently are in justice bound to make his will, his precepts and commandments, the rule, the governing principle, of your conduct.

Remember God as your *Redeemer*. When you, together with all the rest of mankind, were in a lost state through sin, God was mercifully pleased to *redeem*—to save—you from that state, by giving his Son Jesus Christ to die for your sake. *He tasted death for every man.* It is in him that *we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.* Remember, therefore, that being thus redeemed—thus *bought with a price*—even the blood of the Son of

God, *you are no longer your own*, are no longer at liberty to live according to your own will, according to your own appetites and desires, but are bound by every tie, both of justice and of gratitude, to live according to the will of him who has thus bought you.

Remember God as your *Sanctifier*. So weak and corrupt is the nature of man in consequence of the transgression of our first parents, that we cannot serve God acceptably without his grace, without the assistance of his Spirit. That assistance is freely offered to you if you will ask for it—if you will seek it in fervent prayer. *Ask and ye shall have*, says our Lord, *seek and ye shall find*; and he assures us, that his *heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him*. Remember, then, that it is the Holy Spirit alone who can effectually *help your infirmities*. Implore his aid to enlighten your understanding, to give strength to your good resolutions, to correct and purify your heart and affections.

Lastly, remember God as your *Judge*. Never for a moment forget that *God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness; that God shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*: and ever remember, that he who will judge you is a Being from whom nothing can be hidden. *All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. He is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. There is not a word in our tongue, but God knoweth it altogether.*

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He even spieth out the secret thoughts and intents of the heart. Young people sometimes venture to yield to temptations to sin, in the hope of concealment. But there is no possibility of concealing any thing from God. *If I say, peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned into day; yea, the darkness is no darkness with God, but the night is as clear as the day, the darkness and light to him are both alike.* Remember therefore that there is no possibility of escaping the observation of an all-seeing Judge. If, in the high spirits of youth, you are tempted to *walk after the way of your own heart*, according to your own appetites and desires, and *after the sight of your own eyes*, yet be assured that *for all these things God will bring you into judgment.*

The keeping upon your mind of this habitual remembrance of God, will require some attention and watchfulness on your part. Both from the distractions, the cares, and the pleasures of the world, and from the waywardness of your own heart, you will be in no small danger of forgetting him. But reflect, that though you may forget God, God will not forget you; and think both on the ingratitude, and on the awful danger of forgetting him. *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God. O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.*

Make use therefore of every means in your power for maintaining the habitual remembrance of God upon your minds. Often employ yourselves in read-

ing religious books, and especially in studying the holy Scriptures. It was to his early knowledge of the Scriptures, that the early piety of Timothy appears to be attributed by St. Paul; and the Psalmist speaks of the study of the word of God as being the most likely means of preserving the young and inexperienced from the temptations to which they are exposed; *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Even by ruling himself according to thy word.* Let the Scriptures then, especially the New Testament, be often in your hand. Read them *attentively*. Read them with an earnest desire to understand them, and with a real resolution to regulate your faith and practice by what you read. When, for instance, you find any sin forbidden, reflect whether you have ever been guilty of that sin, and if you have been guilty of it, implore the forgiveness of God through the merits of Jesus Christ, and resolve in humble reliance upon the aid of the Holy Spirit, that you will be guilty of it no more. If you find any duty commanded, any moral grace of character recommended and enforced, consider how far you have been diligent in the performance of such duty, or in the cultivation of such grace or virtue, or how far you have fallen short of it. Implore the divine blessing upon what you read. Beseech God to enlighten your understanding, so that you may see and know what things you ought to do, and also to give you grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same.

To preserve the remembrance of God upon your

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mind, nothing will contribute more than the habit of private devotion. Be regular and constant in addressing yourself in prayer to the Author and Giver of all good things. Every morning when you rise to your daily occupations, and every night when you return to rest, remember to fall on your knees before God, to implore the forgiveness of your manifold transgressions, to beg of Him protection and support, the strengthening of your weakness, and the supply of your wants. And besides your more regular devotions, you should endeavour to acquire and cultivate a habit of, often in the course of the day, directing your thoughts to God, and offering to him short ejaculations of prayer and praise in all circumstances, whether of affliction and distress, or of prosperity and rejoicing. It has been well observed, that prayer is the breath of a Christian, and that it is as easy to live without breathing, as to support the Christian life without prayer.

But you must not consider private prayer alone as sufficient for the purposes of piety, but must also embrace every opportunity of joining with your fellow Christians on the Lord's day in public or social prayer. Public worship is a duty in many respects different, and resting on different grounds from private worship. It is a duty which, however it may be neglected by some, and perhaps scoffed at by others, is in itself of no little importance. You must remember, that the apostle earnestly exhorts us not to forsake the *assembling of ourselves together as*

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the manner of some is. You must consider, that public worship tends peculiarly to promote the glory of God, and to advance his kingdom among men. You will bear in mind that public worship has always been maintained among the true servants of God, and that they have sincerely lamented the being at any time deprived of it. Be regular therefore in your attendance at church. Join in the prayers seriously and devoutly; and during the whole time that you are in the house of God, be on your guard against falling into any levity or impropriety of behaviour. It is painful to see young persons laughing and talking in church instead of attending to the service, thus distracting the attention and interrupting the devotions of those near them. Such conduct shews a want of good sense, as well as of religious principle and feeling. Those who are guilty of it should consider the holy place in which they are, and learn to shew more reverence for the sanctuary of God.

Nothing however will contribute more to keeping up in your minds the habitual remembrance of God than the devout partaking of the Lord's supper. This holy ordinance was appointed for the benefit of *all* Christians; for the *young* no less than the old; for all, in short, who are sensible of their need of a Redeemer. It was instituted by our Saviour *in the same night in which he was betrayed*. You ought to be induced to receive it by a feeling of gratitude;—by a sense of duty and obedience to the command of

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a dying Redeemer;—and also by a regard for your own best interests, for it was appointed for the strengthening and refreshing of your souls. You are *old enough* to partake of it, if you are old enough to understand the religion which you profess; if you are old enough to believe in Jesus Christ, old enough to repent of your past sins, and stedfastly to intend to lead a Christian life for the time to come. It is true, that young people are too much in the habit of neglecting the Lord's supper. But you must not *follow a multitude to do evil*. A duty does not cease to be a duty, because numbers of thoughtless beings are unmindful of it. But you should regard the partaking of the Lord's supper not merely in the light of a duty. Consider it rather as a high privilege, as constituting part of that spiritual armour of God, by which you may be enabled to overcome the peculiar temptations, to which your time of life is exposed*.

This attention to your religious duties, your thus openly arraying yourselves on the Lord's side, may perhaps expose you to observation. Those of your own age, who are themselves destitute of religious principle, and little under the influence even of common sense, will perhaps, in their thoughtlessness and folly, call you too religious and over scrupulous, will perhaps even pretend to laugh at and to make game of you. But you will not be so weak and cowardly as to be prevented from doing your duty by the idle

* See a Tract, entitled, "Young Persons invited to the Lord's Table." Price 3d. Rivingtons.

scoffing of fools and unbelievers. You will not suffer their senseless ridicule to prevent you from *holding fast by God*, from openly avowing your allegiance to your Creator, your Redeemer, and your Sanctifier. You have been enlisted, and solemnly engaged, to fight manfully under the banner of Christ against sin, the world, and the devil. You must not be so unmanly as to *desert* that banner. Remember the words of our Lord, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.* And, on the other hand, *Whosoever shall confess me while on earth, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

And let not any one try to persuade you, that the habitual remembrance of God, the constant attention to religion which I have been recommending, will tend to throw a gloom over you, and to check that cheerfulness, which at your age is so natural and engaging. So far from being an enemy to cheerfulness, religion would encourage and promote it, but encourage it on its only proper foundation, the love of God, and a well-grounded hope in his mercy. You have, I trust, more sense, than to be advocates for a cheerfulness which is founded upon ignorance, thoughtlessness, and irreligion. Religion has the promise of this world, as well as of that which is to come; her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Religion will promote your happi-

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ness both here and hereafter. May God fill you with all joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The Prayer.

O God, who dwellest in the highest heavens, yet beholdest all the things that are done upon earth, grant that we may never forget that nothing is hidden from thy all-seeing eye. Make us seriously to consider, that thou our God art ever present with us; that thou beholdest all our actions; hearest all our words; and that the very secrets of our hearts are not hid from thee; that thou notest in thy book whatsoever we think, speak, or do now; and wilt for all these things bring us to judgment, at the great and terrible day of his appearing. Enable us to set thee always before us, to remember and acknowledge thee in all our ways, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Texts to be committed to memory.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when ye shall say, I have no pleasure in them. *Eccles. xii. 1.*

Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find. *Luke xi. 9, 10.*

God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness. *Acts xvii. 3.*

God shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. *Eccles. xii. 14.*

All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. *Heb. iv. 13.*

He is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. There is not a word in our tongue, but God knoweth it altogether. *Ps. cxxxix. 2, 3.^a*

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God. O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Even by ruling himself according to thy word. *Ps. cxix. 9.*

Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is. *Heb. x. 25.*

Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. *Mark viii. 38.*

Whosoever shall confess me while on earth, him will I confess also before my Father which is heaven. *Matt. x. 32.*

^a Let young people learn this Psalm by heart.

SERMON II.

THE YOUNG MAN'S DUTY TO HIS PARENTS.

EPH. vi. 2, 3.

Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee.

NEXT to the fear and the love of God, no duty has a stronger claim to the attention and observance of young men than the duty which they owe to their parents.

This duty is founded on the common feelings and instincts of nature. As nature inclines almost all animated beings to nourish and provide for their offspring, so long at least as they need their care, and fondly to watch over and protect them, so it is natural that their offspring should become attached to their parents, as soon as they are so far advanced in growth, to be sensible of their kindness and affection. Such attachment to parents should especially be felt by man, who stands at the head of the animal creation, and whose reason should direct and give strength to the salutary instincts and teaching of nature.

You to whom I address myself should reflect, that as your parents have been, under Providence, the authors of your being, so they nourished and watched over you in the helplessness of infancy and childhood. Consider how hard they have toiled to provide for you food and clothing, how they have denied themselves the comforts, perhaps even the necessities, of life, that you might not want. Think how many labours, and cares, and anxieties they have undergone on your account, and for your welfare. Certainly you must be sensible that they have the strongest claims to your gratitude and tender regard, that all the common feelings of nature require you to treat them with affection and respect, require you to LOVE, HONOUR, AND SUCCOUR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.

These suggestions of nature and reason are strongly enforced in the Scriptures. You well know that the fifth commandment enjoins you to *Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* The Scriptures of the New Testament enforce the observance of all moral and social duties, not so much by temporal motives, as by considerations derived from the love and mercy of God, and from thankfulness for the atonement effected by the death of Christ. Instead of the promise of long life and happiness in this world, they hold forth the glorious prospect of eternal unfading happiness in the world to come. St. Paul however appears to enforce the observance of duty to parents by an allusion to the promise in the fifth command-

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ment, *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee*^b. *That it may be well with thee.* As attention to the relative duties contributes essentially to the well-being of society, so dutiful obedience to your parents will tend materially to promote your own well-being, your own comfort and happiness, in this life. St. Paul repeats this injunction in the Epistle to the Colossians, *Children, obey your parents in all things*,—observe the expression in ALL things, in all things not contrary to the divine law,—*for this is well pleasing to the Lord*^c.

The precepts of the Old Testament are in strict accordance with these injunctions of the Apostle. *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck*^d. No ornament is more graceful and becoming to young people, than dutiful obedience to parents. So again, *Keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck*^e. And thus in another passage of the same book. *Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old*^f.

This duty of obedience to parents is clearly en-

^b Eph. vi. 1, 2, 3.

^c Prov. vi. 20, 21.

^d Col. iii. 20.

^e Prov. xxiii. 22.

^f Prov. i. 2, 3.

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forced by the dictates of reason. Your parents have a *right* to your obedience, in return for their care and trouble, and anxiety in bringing you up. Consider that their age and experience in the world render them for the most part better qualified, than you can possibly be, to judge what is right, and fitting, and expedient. It is probable too that in what they forbid, or require you to do, your good, your real interest and advantage is the object which they principally have in view.

And of this duty to your parents you must never lose sight. As it was the first lesson which you were taught—or *should have been taught*—when you were children, so you should never forget it, so long as your parents' lives are continued. In this country the laws give authority to parents over their children, in all things not inconsistent with any higher obligation, until the children have attained the age of twenty-one years, or until they have, with their parents' consent, bound themselves to obey some other person. But still you must never forget—never cease—to *love, honour, and succour your father and mother*, so long as their lives are continued to them. Always treat them with affectionate respect; comply so far as you reasonably can with their wishes; and endeavour to soothe them under the infirmities of their declining years by your kindness and attention. *Grieve not thy father, says the son of Sirach, as long as he liveth. And if his understanding fail, have patience with him; and despise him not,*

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*when thou art in thy full strength**. Make every allowance for the infirmities of old age. Bear patiently with any peevishness or quickness of temper, any failure of mind or memory, or with any of the distressing maladies which some time afflict the body in the decline of life. Let nothing overcome the love and respect which is due from a son to his parents.

Such being the suggestions of nature and right reason, such the express injunctions of the Scriptures, it is painful to see young men and women,—often indeed mere boys and girls, long before they have attained the age of maturity,—presumptuously setting up for themselves, and treating the wishes and even the commands of their parents with disregard; sometimes they receive their injunctions or their advice in sullenness, and sometimes openly rebel against it. Headstrong and unruly, they determine to have their own way, to follow their own wills, their own lusts and appetites. Perhaps, if their parents enforce their commands with some degree of warmth, with some angriness of language, these self-willed young persons even go so far as to give them angry language in return. Hardly any thing can be more blameable—more revolting—than such behaviour. A real Christian must not return *railing for railing* to *any* one; but to hear a young man render railing for railing to a parent, to hear him use, perhaps injurious language, perhaps even curses and imprecations, to one to whom he owes his being,

* Eccclus. iii. 12.

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and to whom he ought to look up with respect and reverence, is indeed most dreadful. Let such young people remember, and reflect upon the awful threatenings denounced in the word of God against disobedient children. *The eye that mocketh his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it^a.* Let them reflect too upon the punishment of the disobedient son in the Mosaic law. *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gates of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die^b.* Again, *Every one that curseth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death^c.* And again, *Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother^d.*

These three latter passages, it is true, are taken from that law which, in the letter, is not binding upon us; and the passage from the book of Proverbs is expressed in a manner that is highly figurative. They all however proceeded from God himself, and shew the heavy displeasure and indignation of God

^a Prov. xxx. 17.

^b Deut. xxi.

^c Lev. xx. 9.

^d Deut. xxvii. 16.

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against those who treat their parents with disrespect. Let young people remember also, that in the New Testament those who are *disobedient to parents*, and *without natural affections*, are ranked with *haters of God* and *covenant-breakers*, and the perpetrators of the greatest enormities.

One branch of your duty to your parents consists in *succouring* them, in helping them in every way, and, so far as you can, in ministering to their wants, in increasing their little stock of comforts. There are, I trust, many instances of young men in the labouring classes, who take pleasure in thus *requiting their parents*; who are glad, out of what they earn when they are at their full strength, to make some return to their parents for their trouble and expense in rearing, in bringing them up. But, on the other hand, there are, I fear, too many young men, who think they are at liberty to spend upon themselves all that they can get, who perhaps waste in drinking and other indulgences that money, a small part of which would materially add to the comfort of their parents. Some of them, too, long before they have attained the age of twenty-one years, if they chance to earn a little more than is sufficient for their bare maintenance, seem to think that they have a right to separate themselves from the parents' family, in order that they may spend all they earn upon themselves. This is a great mistake. So long as a young man is under the age of full maturity, and residing in the same family, his father has a legal control over his earnings. And

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even after that age, the voice both of Scripture and of nature would suggest to a son that he ought to do all in his power to add to the comforts of his parents, that he ought to deny himself any indulgence, rather than suffer them to want. It is indeed most unnatural and disgraceful for a young man to spend upon his own lusts, perhaps in drinking with riotous companions, that money, which ought to relieve those from whom he derives his being. You may remember the censure cast by our Saviour upon those, who refused to give such assistance to their parents, upon pretence, that the money which they could spare was *corban*, that is, devoted to the services of the temple, destined to religious uses. Such conduct he calls *setting aside the commandments of God*. But how infinitely worse is it for a young man to refuse to *do ought for his father or his mother*, in order that he may spend all upon himself, may consume it upon his own lusts !

You, I trust, will never be guilty of such disgraceful conduct. You are bound by the voice both of nature and of Scripture to *love, honour, and succour* your father and mother. By complying with their suggestions you will promote your own well-being, your own credit and comfort and happiness in this world, and will do that which *is right*, and *well-pleasing to the Lord*.

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The Prayer.

Almighty Father, I humbly pray thee to dispose my heart at all times to love, honour, and succour my father and mother. Incline me dutifully to attend to their instruction and advice, and to receive their reproofs with meekness and submission. Enable me to bear with all their infirmities, whether of body or mind, and make me willing to minister to their necessities, and by all the means in my power to contribute to their comfort and happiness. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

From Jenks.

O Lord, my heavenly Father, I humbly beg thy blessing, grace, and mercy upon my parents. Cast them not away in the time of old age, forsake them not when their strength faileth them; but have compassion on their infirmities, and help them in all their weaknesses. O remember not against them any of their former iniquities; but according to thy mercy remember them for thy goodness sake in Christ Jesus. Grant that true wisdom may ever be with them; that their hoary heads may be found in the way of righteousness, and their souls be ever precious in thy sight. The longer they live in this world, make them still the readier to die, and the fitter for life eternal. Be thou the strength of their hearts and their portion for ever, through Jesus Christ.

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Texts to be committed to memory.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee. *Eph. vi. 1, 2, 3.*

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. *Col. iii. 20.*

My son, hear the instructions of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. *Prov. i. 8, 9.*

Keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. *Prov. vi. 20, 21.*

Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. *Prov. xxiii. 22.*

The eye that mocketh his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it. *Prov. xxx. 17.*

Every one that curseth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death. *Lev. xx. 9.*

Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. *Deut. xxvii. 16.*

SERMON III.

YOUNG MEN CAUTIONED AGAINST BAD COMPANY.

1 COR. XV. 33.

Evil communications corrupt good manners.

AMONG the many dangers against which we all have to guard, those especially who are just setting out on the journey of life, and beginning to think themselves their own masters, one of the most destructive is that which arises from keeping bad company. *Evil communications*, says the apostle, *corrupt good manners*. Even those whose characters appear to be in some degree formed, who have made some progress in the ways of holiness, and whose *manners* as yet are comparatively *good*, cannot keep bad company without danger of being corrupted. Where, however, the character is still unsettled, and the *manners* instead of being good are rather disposed to follow the guidance of appetite, or passion, or fancy, without regard to religion, such danger becomes still greater.

The pernicious effects of keeping bad company

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proceed from several causes. One of the principal of these is the *power and force of example*.

Of the power of example no one is ignorant. We know how almost all men, especially those whose character have the pliancy and easiness of youth, are apt to imitate, almost involuntarily, the example of those with whom they associate. If the companions, with whom young men principally live, are in their conduct governed by the laws of sound reason and genuine religion—by a regard to the will of God—such conduct will have a satisfactory influence upon all who associate with them. They will become more and more confirmed in good principles, and right habits and dispositions; and while they promote their own happiness and well being, will grow in favour with God and man. *He*, says the Scripture, *he that walketh with wise men shall be wise*^a;—and he that, like David, resolves to be *the companion of those that fear God and keep his commandments*, will catch from them something of the spirit by which they are actuated, and will probably become good from the force of good example. If, on the other hand, any one, one especially who as yet is young and inexperienced, is unhappily thrown much into the society of men who make light of all the precepts and sanctions of religion, great indeed is the danger of his being corrupted by them. It is probable that from his parents and his teachers—indeed from the suggestions of his own conscience—he has received some notions of right and wrong,

^a Prov. xxii. 20.

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some good impressions, which, at first, will be greatly shocked by what he sees and hears upon coming among such evil associates. But soon his right principles and right feelings will be weakened, perhaps entirely effaced, by communication with such men, and his own passions and appetites and lusts will prompt him to throw off like his companions the restraints laid on them by religion and conscience.

The dread and the hatred of sin is, of course, greatly lessened by seeing it commonly practised, especially when practised by those with whom the young man intimately associates. When he sees them without fear indulging all their corrupt desires, and giving free scope to debauchery and sensuality, he will too soon be encouraged to run with them to *the same excess of riot*. His natural appetites are as strong as theirs, and their example emboldens him to give way to his appetites, without trying to control them.

But he will be corrupted, not only by the actual *example* of his bad companions, but by the *language* which they are in the habit of using;—not only by what they *do*, but by what they *say*. They are in the habit of constantly indulging in that foolish talking and jesting, which St. Paul speaks of as inconsistent with the Christian character. In their corrupt communications they freely and without shame speak of sensual indulgences, and of sins which ought not to be named among Christians, with careless levity, and as a matter of jest and merriment. Nothing tends

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more than such conversation to break down all the safeguards of virtue, and to grieve and drive from us the good Spirit of God. A thoughtless young man is apt to be taken by the appearance, which his loose associates put on, of caring for nothing, and of making a jest of things which are held in respect by sober-minded and sensible men. *In the latter days*, says the apostle, *shall be scoffers, walking after their own lusts*^a. Men who are bent upon walking after their own lusts, are in great danger of becoming *scoffers*, of getting a habit of laughing and joking about things most awfully serious. Their ignorance and their folly possibly may even be carried so far as to induce them to treat religion itself with contempt, and to say, *The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.—What is the Almighty, that we should serve him; or what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?*

The living much with *one* man of this character is likely to be attended with most hurtful consequences; and the danger is dreadfully increased when such companions are *many*. The influence of bad example of course becomes more powerful and more contagious from numbers. Men in general are easily swayed by the example of those in whose company they are. In spite it may be of the suggestions of reason and common sense, and of the checks of conscience, they weakly suffer themselves to be led away by their associates. They weakly think and say that they *must do as others do*, that they cannot stand out

^a 2 Pet. iii. 3.

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from the rest, without reflecting on the real nature and certain consequence of such foolish and unmanly conduct. They should rather remember the solemn injunctions of Scripture, *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*^a. The example of numbers furnishes no excuse for bad conduct, nor will it lessen the punishment of guilt hereafter. When numbers join together for any sinful purpose, the injury is so much the greater to the peace and well-being of society, and may even in this world require to be visited with a punishment proportionably heavy. And in the great day of retribution, the number of the guilty will be no skreen, no safeguard from the awful sentence of condemnation. *Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished*. Multitudes that have walked together *after the way of their own hearts*, in the paths of sin and folly, in the broad and easy way that leads to destruction, will together be condemned to that place of torment which is appointed for the wicked, and for those people that forget God.

The companion of fools, says the Wise man, shall be destroyed^b; and no men more deserve to be numbered among *fools*, than those who act in such manner, as if they said in their hearts *there is no God*, those, who by the working of wickedness, give evident proof that they are without understanding.

One of the hurtful—the natural—consequences of associating with bad men, which must not be entirely

^a Exod. xxiii. 2.

^b Prov. xiii. 20.

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passed over, is the injury which it does, not only to a man's own moral and religious habits, but to his character and reputation in society.

Nobody is insensible to the value of *character*, to the importance of preserving a fair name and reputation among his neighbours. *A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches*^a. A man often depends upon his character, not merely for his comfort and happiness in life, but even for actual subsistence. Consequently, it is generally considered, that wilfully to bring a slur upon a man's reputation, is to do him a cruel injury. Now every one sees that nothing is more hurtful to a man's character than his associating with bad men. He must expect to be judged of from his companions. And if, in defiance of all danger and of all warnings, he still clings to their society, it is too probable that, together with all other right feelings, he will lose even his regard for his own character, will become callous and insensible to shame, and be utterly given over to every evil word and work. *Were they ashamed*, says the Prophet, *when they had committed iniquity? yea, they were not at all ashamed, neither would they blush*^b. The being thus lost to shame, is a sad mark of hardened, incorrigible wickedness. Many a young man, who seemed to be setting out in life with every fair prospect of doing well both here and hereafter, has had all his fair prospects blasted, and been brought to utter ruin—ruin to his fortune, ruin to his health, ruin to

^a Prov. xxii. 1.

^b Jer. vi. 15.

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his reputation, *ruin to his soul*—by unhappily falling into bad company, and then, by not having the resolution—the manliness—to extricate himself from it.

He has formed perhaps an intimacy with some young man of his own age, who has something pleasant and agreeable in his manners and general character, but has no regard for, no sense of, the obligations of religion. By him he is led into the society of other ignorant and thoughtless young men, equally devoid of religious principle. He is probably soon seduced by them into a neglect of all the duties of the Lord's day, and tempted to spend in some idle amusement, the time that ought to be devoted to public worship. Under the same bad influence he accompanies them to the public-house, and joins them in drinking to excess, while he is more and more corrupted by the loose conversation, and by the swearing and profaneness which meet his ears. Perhaps his parents or some other friend, perhaps his *spiritual pastor*—the minister of the parish in which he lives—being aware of and lamenting his danger, may kindly warn and admonish him. But his unprincipled associates encourage him to laugh at all such admonition, and to treat them with contempt, and the evil pride and obstinacy which are natural to the heart of man are in unison with their suggestions. It is awful to think, that the Holy Spirit being thus resisted and grieved, may at length altogether depart from him, and leave him to make utter shipwreck of his conscience, utter shipwreck of his soul.

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i Let me therefore earnestly exhort you—and I entreat parents and all who take an interest in the good conduct and well-being of the young to enforce and second the exhortation—let me, I say, earnestly exhort young men especially, who are most exposed to this temptation, to be ever on your guard against the many and great dangers which arise from keeping bad company. Avoid the first beginnings, the first inlets, of this danger. Never form an intimacy with men of bad character, men who have no regard for religion. In the various transactions, the multiplied business of life, you may occasionally be thrown into the company of such men, but do not willingly, and of choice, enter much into their society. When unavoidably engaged in their company, though you should certainly behave towards them with civility and courtesy, yet you should be on your guard like a man who feels himself to be in an enemy's country, like a man who knows himself to be surrounded by danger. Remember the warning of St. Paul. *I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother—that is a brother Christian—be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat*^a. Remember too the blessedness which in the first Psalm is spoken of as belonging to him, *who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful*^b. The sitting in the seat of the

^a Psalm i. 1.

^b 1 Cor. v. 11.

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scornful, the sitting in company with men who scoff at—who make a jest of—serious things, is likely to be attended with most hurtful consequences. The men against whose society I am warning you, may have many pleasant and engaging qualities, in addition to the temptations which they hold forth to your sensual appetites; but let not any of these temptations seduce or entice you to become their associate. *My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. My son, walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy feet from their paths^c—for their feet run to evil—their feet go down to death—their steps take hold on hell.*

If unhappily you have already fallen much into the society of immoral and irreligious men, the sooner you can extricate yourselves, the sooner you can break off the connexion, the better. I do not ask you to behave towards them with harshness, with any degree of unkindness, but firmly resolve quietly to avoid their society—society in which you cannot continue without endangering your dearest interests—without peril to your soul. *Come out from among them, saith the Scripture, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing^d, that ye be not partaker of their evil deeds.* If you continue in their society, you will hardly help being partakers of their evil deeds—hardly help being corrupted by their evil communications, their bad example, and consequently will be in danger of being partakers of their punishment. If you wilfully keep company while on earth with the

^c Prov. i. 10, 15.

^d 1 Cor. vi. 17.

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enemies of God and goodness, you will be in danger of being condemned hereafter to live for ever in the wretched society of wicked spirits in hell. It is a most awful consideration, that in the world to come every one of us must be *either* the companion of devils or the companion of angels.

Endeavour then, I entreat you, more and more to cultivate the acquaintance, to seek the society, of those who love God, and humbly try to keep his commandments, those who sincerely believe in the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ, and shew the reality of their faith in the unblameableness and holiness of their life. So, by the help of the divine Spirit, may you become more and more prepared to become hereafter a member of the society of the blessed, the society of *an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, of the spirits of just men made perfect, and of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*^c.

^c Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24.

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The Prayer.

O God, by thy providence and thy grace preserve me, I beseech thee, from the way of sinners, from the society of evil men, and from the contagion of bad example. O hold thou up my going in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. Make me the companion of those that fear thee, and keep thy commandments. And after walking before thee and with thy servants while on earth, bring me at last into the glorious assembly of just men made perfect, through the merits of the Mediator of the new covenant, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Texts to be committed to memory.

Evil communications corrupt good manners. 1 Cor. xv. 23.

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil. *Exod.* xxiii. 2.

The companion of fools shall be destroyed. *Prov.* xiii. 20.

Were they ashamed, when they had committed iniquity? yea, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush. *Jer.* vi. 15.

I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 1 Cor. v. 11.

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Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful. *Psal. i. 1.*

My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. My son, walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy feet from their paths—for their feet run to evil—their feet go down to death—their steps take hold on hell. *Prov. i. 10, 15.*

Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing. *1 Cor. vi. 17.*

I have not dwelt with vain persons, neither will I have fellowship with the deceitful. I have hated the congregation of the wicked, and will not sit among the ungodly. *Psal. xxvi. 4, 5.*

A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person. *Psal. ci. 5.*

SERMON IV.

—
SWEARING.
—

JAMES v. 12.

Above all things, my brethren, swear not.

OF the many sins into which young men are apt to fall from the bad example of others, and their own thoughtlessness, one of the most prevalent is the senseless habit of profane swearing.

There is hardly any sinful habit which admits of so little excuse, or which more plainly indicates a want of proper reverence for God's name, an absence of serious religious principles.

The name of God is pronounced in Scripture to be *holy*^a and *reverend*, and you well know the respect for that holy name which is enjoined in the third commandment. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*^b. God will not hold *guiltless*—will surely punish—those, who make use of his great name to confirm a falsehood,

^a Psalm cxi. 9.

^b Exodus xx.

those, in other words, who knowingly take a false oath, who are guilty of perjury. Neither will he *hold guiltless* those thoughtless persons, who profane his holy name by using it as a light by-word. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ enforce this injunction of the third commandment. *I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communications be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil^b.* The apostle St. James repeats this precept of his divine Master. *Above all things—observe the earnestness of the apostle—ABOVE ALL THINGS, my brethren, SWEAR NOT; neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation^a.*

Now how are these precepts—thus plain, and thus earnestly enforced—how are they observed in this country? How are they attended to by men who profess and call themselves Christians, who acknowledge their obligation to obey all the precepts and commandments of Christ, and rest their hope of salvation at the last day of account on his death and bloodshedding?

The answer to such questions is painful. In our towns and villages, it is, I fear, hardly possible to meet

^b Matt. v. 34, 35, 36, 37.

^a James v. 12.

a number of people together in their unguarded moments, especially if their passions are in any way excited, without hearing the language of profaneness, the sounds of cursing and swearing. With many thoughtless persons—the children of levity and folly—the name of God and of Christ is a usual expression of astonishment and wonder. The angry and passionate give vent to their wrath in swearing; and too often have oaths and curses become the language of authority, and the commands or threatenings of a master, or even of a parent, are enforced by imprecations. The very children in our streets often become proficient in this language of Hell. While from the spirit of our religion it is from the lips of children—or, in the words of Scripture, *out of the mouths of babes and sucklings*—that the praise of God should be perfected, those lips are too often taught, by the sad example of those by whom they are brought up, almost to lisp in curses, and when they first begin to speak, to utter the language of profaneness and blasphemy. When any thing vexes or irritates them, they are apt to vent their angry feelings in swearing, and as they advance in years, the dreadful habit grows up with them. It is hardly possible, and perhaps would be useless, to pretend to point out all the various ways in which thoughtless people incur, in a greater or less degree, the guilt of profane swearing, or of taking God's name in vain. Some of the most common, however, it may be expedient to mention, in order to make my meaning more plain.

And first, there are every where persons who are in the habit of using the name of God to confirm the most idle assertions, or to give force to the most empty threats; who at any moment are ready to *swear by God* that what they say is true. In addition to the profanation of God's holy name, these men have often even the sin of perjury to answer for; for inconsiderately as they swear, they repeatedly bring—I had almost said can hardly avoid bringing—that name to confirm a falsehood.

Another numerous description is of those, who use this sacred name as an idle exclamation, as an expression of surprise and astonishment, more especially when they hear any painful tidings, or when any evil accident unexpectedly befalls them. At such a time they unthinkingly cry out “Good God!” or “Lord!” and consider not that the High and Holy One, whose name they thus unhallow, will for all these things bring them into judgment.

There are many other expressions which in reality are short prayers or ejaculations to the throne of grace, *to save us, to bless us, to have mercy on us*, and the like. These, as well as those which I have just mentioned, are most fitting to be used at any time, and more especially in time of distress or danger, with seriousness and devotion, and like them probably had their origin in genuine fervent piety. But when used as idle exclamations, as mere expressions of astonishment and wonder, these also are surely to be consi-

dered—in some degree—as profanations of God's name.

The sinfulness and danger of any such profanation is evident, not only from the third commandment, but from other passages of holy writ. *Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God*^a. To *profane*, is to treat as common that which is sacred, not to be used but with reverence. The name of God, we are told, is *holy and reverend*, most unfit to be uttered as an idle exclamation, a light by-word. Again; whenever we use the Lord's prayer, we beg of God that his name may be HALLOWED. After such a petition, it is surely a sort of mockery of God, if we are ourselves guilty of *profaning* or *unhallowing* it.

What has been said of the profanation of the name of God, applies equally to that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As he is God, his name cannot be unhallowed without an express violation of the third commandment. It is ordained by the Almighty, *that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father*; and we are told that *God has given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*. To use the name, therefore, of *Jesus*, or of *Christ*, as an exclamation of surprise, or of pain, or in any other way than with respect and reverence, is doubtless a vio-

^a Leviticus xix. 12.

lation of the duty which we owe to God. I wish you also to remark and to recollect, that to *swear* by Christ is the same as to swear by God the Father; and that the sin is similar, whether we swear by the express name of either of these divine Persons, or by that of the relation in which they stand to us as our Maker, our Redeemer, or our Saviour.

Without seriousness and reverence to ask any thing *for the love of God or of Christ, or for God, or Christ's sake*, must also be ranked among the violations of the honour due to the name of the Most High.

A practice which, though not a direct violation of the third commandment, is yet of kin to the sins above mentioned, is a light profane use of words which signify things of divine and holy nature, which relate entirely to religion and the concerns of the life to come, such as our *faith*, our *redemption*, or *salvation*. To swear by any of these in our common talk is to incur both the guilt of profaning holy things, and that of vain and rash swearing. How expressly this latter is forbidden by our Saviour no one ought to be ignorant. *I say unto you*, says he, in the passage of his sermon on the Mount, which I have already quoted, *I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King: neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea, Nay,*

nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. St. James repeats the injunction of his divine Master. *Above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, lest you fall into condemnation.* In each passage the prohibition, you will observe, is universal. *All* swearing in our ordinary communication is expressly forbidden.

On fit and solemn occasions, indeed, it is oftentimes not only lawful, but even our duty, to swear; on occasions, that is, when we are required so to do by the laws of the land, or when the purposes of justice or charity can be served by it. *Thou shalt swear*, says the prophet Jeremiah, *Thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness*^b: and the apostle remarks, that *an oath for confirmation is the end of all strife*. Indeed, the lawfulness of an oath on weighty and solemn occasions is confirmed by the practice of patriarchs and holy men of old, by that of St. Paul, who repeatedly calls God to witness, and by the express directions in holy writ.

Swearing in whatever manner, however, in our ordinary communication, and when it is unnecessary, is directly contrary to the prohibitions which I have just read to you. It all *cometh of evil*, or of the evil one the devil; and will all tend to bring us *into condemnation*; for we are assured that God will not hold such swearers guiltless.

Another practice which I am here bound to censure,

^b Jeremiah iv. 2.

but which from its hateful nature I am unwilling to enter upon, is that of those persons, who upon the slightest provocation—oftentimes upon no provocation at all—are in the habit of pouring forth the bitterest *curses* and *imprecations*. When their anger is stirred up by any—or by no—cause, these persons are wont to call upon God to *damn*, or to *blast*, and to *confound* the object of their wrath. Sometimes they call down the severest infliction of the divine vengeance on their children, and on those who ought to be most dear to them ;—sometimes even on themselves, and in their madness consign themselves, their own souls and bodies, to eternal perdition.

My people, says the Lord by his prophet Hosea, *my people doth not consider*. Surely if the persons of whom I have been speaking would but for a moment *consider* the dreadful meaning of the imprecations which they so heedlessly utter—the real meaning of that awful word *damnation*—they would shrink from using them with compunction and dismay. *Cursing will happen to those who delight in cursing*. May God bring them to repentance, so that they may not by sad experience feel how dreadful a thing that *damnation* is, which they so thoughtlessly call down !

Let me intreat such young men as have in any degree contracted the sad habit of swearing, seriously to reflect upon its great folly and danger, and to resolve to break it off without delay. You say that you swear *without thinking*. My object and my wish is to make you *think*.

Reflect on the *frequency* of this sin. *If for every idle—every sinful—word that a man shall speak he shall give account thereof at the day of judgment^a, think what a load of guilt, what a multitude of oaths, the common swearer will have to answer for. Every single oath you utter is recorded against you in the book of God's remembrance, and it will be brought against you at the last day, unless it shall be blotted out upon your repentance through faith in the atonement of Christ. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned^b.*

Reflect too on the *smallness* of any real temptation to this sin. Among the most powerful temptations to transgress the laws of God, are the gratification of some bodily appetite, and the advancement of some worldly retreat. Neither of these temptations applies to the sin of the profane swearer. By swearing he gratifies no craving appetite, he procures from it no advantage, no earthly good whatever; but sins, properly speaking, **WITHOUT TEMPTATION**. The strength of a temptation must never be pleaded as an excuse for doing wrong; for whatever the temptation may be, God will by his grace, if we are not wanting to ourselves, enable us to resist and to overcome it. Still, to sin without temptation, must certainly be considered as no little aggravation of guilt. For a man to hazard his eternal welfare for the greatest possible earthly advantage—to lose his own soul for the sake of gaining even the whole

^a Matt. xii. 36.

^b Matt. xii. 36, 37.

world, would be a most unwise bargain. But what words can express the foolishness of him, who will risk his salvation for the sake of uttering blasphemous words; who can consent by swearing to throw away his soul, though he knows that by so doing he shall gain nothing !

Let me then again entreat such young men, as have unhappily contracted the habit of profane swearing, to endeavour at once to break it off. Firmly resolve—*be utterly purposed—that your mouth shall not offend*, either in this or in any other manner. You say, perhaps, that as you swear without thinking, so you hardly know when you swear. Then desire your friends and your companions, whenever you *do* swear, to tell you of it, and be really thankful to them for so doing.

Above all, implore the help of God to enable you to get the better of this evil habit. Say, *Set a watch, O Lord, before my lips; keep the door of my mouth. Beseech Him to grant, that the words of your mouth as well as the meditations of your heart may be always acceptable in his sight, that you may always use his holy name with reverence and honour.*

The Prayer.

O Almighty God, whose name is holy, grant that I may never speak unadvisedly with my lips, but may always treat thy holy name, and all that belongs to thy honour and service, with respect and reverence.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Mercifully forgive the innumerable offences of my tongue. Bless with the grace of thy Holy Spirit all those against whom I have at any time uttered imprecations, and grant that the awful curses, which in my madness I have at any time called down either on myself or on others, may be all done away, through Him who was made a curse for us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Texts to be committed to memory.

Above all things, my brethren, swear not. *James v. 12.*

I say unto you, Swear not all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communications be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. *Matt. v. 34—37.*

Thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness. *Jer. iv. 2.*

Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. *Matt. xii. 36, 37.*

SERMON V.

—
SOBRIETY.
—

ROM. xiii. 13.

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness.

IN several of his Epistles, St. Paul powerfully urges the consideration of the light and privileges of the Gospel, as an argument for avoiding the sins, which were practised during the night of heathenism, which sins he accordingly terms *works of darkness*. At the head of these works of darkness, he names in the text *rioting and drunkenness*; and certainly, there is hardly any sin more unbecoming a Christian, or more fitly called a work of darkness. *They that be drunken*, says St. Paul in another place, *are drunken in the night*^a. This low sin, which proceeds from the darkness of folly, and the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, ought to be ashamed to shew itself in the light of day.

The sin of drunkenness is a sin so shameful in its nature, so dangerous in its consequences, and in

^a 1 Thess. v. 7.

every way so opposite to Christian engagements, and Christian principles, and Christian hopes, that I can hardly be too anxious to guard you against it. Allow me therefore to mention to you, very shortly, some of the evils which belong to the sin, although it must be confessed that they are so plain and evident, that your own sense and observation ought sufficiently to point them out to you.

And, first, one peculiar evil attendant on drunkenness is, its tendency to stupify the mind, to deprive a man of the proper use and exercise of his reason.

Reason is that excellent faculty, which was given us for our guide through life, which enables us to distinguish evil from good, which raises us above the beasts that perish, and makes us to approach towards the image of God. For a man to deprive himself of this excellent endowment by drunkenness and excess, is to slight the best gifts of God, and to degrade, to debase, himself below the lowest of the brute creation. While he thus sins against God and his own soul, he makes himself an object of pity and contempt to his fellow creatures. Whatever his rank and station in life, whatever his qualifications, whatever his merits in other respects, may be, yet by this one vice he undoes the effect of them all, and makes himself the object of the mockery and laughter, not only of those who are in possession of the full use of that reason which he has madly thrown away, but even of children who have not yet attained to, and of idiots who never possessed it. The drunkard makes himself an object

of pity and contempt to all;—of pity to the wise and good; of contempt to the unthinking, who without remorse make him the object of mockery and laughter.

Pride, it is true, was not made for man; but there is a proper feeling of manliness, a sense of dignity, there is what is called an honest pride, which it might be thought would make a man shudder at exposing himself in such a situation.

Having thrown off the control of reason, the control of religion goes along with it. One of the sore evils attendant upon those, who are in the habit of following strong drink, and continuing at it till they are inflamed by it, is, that *they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands*^b. They throw off their regard for religion, and feel no sense either of the temporal mercies and blessings which they every day receive from God, or of those far greater mercies and blessings which are offered to them through the death of Christ, the *work*, the *operation*, of the hands of God which he has wrought for the benefit of their souls.

A man who has wilfully thrown away the control of reason and the restraints of religion, cannot hope for the continuance of the preventing and assisting grace of God. The apostle admonishes us not to be guilty of drunkenness and excess, but to be filled with the Holy Spirit^c. These two things are placed, as it were, in opposition the one to the other. A man who is filled with the Holy Spirit, who is effectually guided

^b Ps. xxviii. 6.

^c Eph. v. 18.

and governed by the grace of God, will not, we may be sure, be guilty of drunkenness. And, on the other hand, he who gives way to this sin, shews that he is not influenced by the aid of the Spirit of God, and does what he can to grieve, and resist, and drive that Holy Spirit from him.

When once a man has thrown off the restraints of reason and religion, and divine grace, there is nothing left to control the headstrong and turbulent passions of his nature. Accordingly, hardly any crime, hardly any offence against God or man, can be named, to which drunkenness may not lead. In particular, it adds fuel to the fire of rage and of lust.

Few people are ignorant of the violent passions which are sometimes roused into a flame by excessive drinking, and of the fierce quarrelling which it oftentimes occasions—leading on not seldom to blows, sometimes even to MURDER. *Who hath wo?* says the wise man, *who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? they that tarry long at the wine^d, they that give way to excess in drinking.*

Under the influence of these evil passions, inflamed by drinking, the tongue is apt to give itself vent in clamorous, and noisy, and injurious language; often in the most dreadful curses, imprecations, and blasphemies. Sometimes under the excitement of drinking, men give way to those *fleshly lusts which war against*

^d Prov. xxiii. 29.

the soul; and are hurried into sin, which may not only endanger their own salvation, but may ruin the character and happiness of the wretched partner of their guilt, and plunge her into everlasting perdition.

In short, as there is hardly any sin to which drunkenness may not lead, so of the numberless offences which are actually committed, and brought under the cognizance of our tribunals—our courts of justice—a very large—perhaps the largest—porportion is occasioned, either by drunkenness, or by the habit of associating with dissolute men in public houses, the haunts and abodes of drunkenness.

Drunkenness being attended with so great danger, we are strongly cautioned against it in the word of God. In the Old Testament, a woe is repeatedly denounced against drunkards. Our blessed Lord, in his well-known exhortation to watchfulness, says, *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and so that day—the day of death, or the day of judgment—come upon you unawares*^c. *Lest at ANY TIME*; our Lord makes no exception for any particular times of festival or rejoicing. And think what it would be, if the day of death were to *come upon you unawares* when in a state of drunkenness, when you are thus by your own act deprived of reason, and of the grace of God. Many unhappy men have in this sad state been suddenly called to their last account. And what is to become of them? St. Paul again and again tells us, that *drunkards shall not*

^c Luke xxi. 34.

inherit the kingdom of God^a. And we may be well assured, that those men who, according to the language of the same apostle, *thus make a god of their belly, and glory in their shame*^b,—take a pride in what they ought to be ashamed of,—act like the *enemies of the cross of Christ*, and will in the end be condemned to that outer darkness, that lake of fire, which is the second death.

But perhaps you will allow the truth and the force of what I say, but plead in your excuse the strength of temptation. We know that *no temptation takes us but such as is common to men*^c, no temptation but such as by the grace of God we may be well able to resist and overcome. But of what nature is this temptation? Perhaps you will say that you drink to drive away care and uneasiness of mind. But of what kind or description are the cares and uneasiness which oppress you? Is it that your prospects in this world are unfavourable? that things go ill with you? that you are apprehensive of not obtaining a sufficiency of the comforts of life? But is drinking to excess the way to better your condition? Does not common sense tell you that it will make it worse? It will make it worse in many ways, in addition to the loss of money, the loss of time, the loss of health, the loss of credit and character, which it is sure to occasion. It will make those who could assist you, less disposed to give you such assistance; and—what is of greater consequence than all

^a 1 Cor. vi. 10.

^b Philip. iii. 19.

^c 1 Cor. x. 13.

the rest—it tends to deprive you of the blessing of God.

Or is the uneasiness of mind, which you would drive away by drinking, occasioned by a sense of sin, by a consciousness of your having offended God, and exposed yourselves to the effects of his displeasure?

But is it not absolute madness to seek to relieve the pressure of sin, by adding to its weight? *If you have sinned, you have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* If you turn unto him with true faith and repentance, and full purpose of amendment of life, your sins will be forgiven you. But surely it is worse than madness to seek relief from drunkenness, instead of having recourse to the blood of Christ, the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.

Or do you say that you are urged to it by your companions, whose solicitations you are unable to resist? But are you so far lost to all independence and manliness of character, as not to be masters of your own conduct? Would you comply, if your companions were, for their amusement, to ask you to drink poison? Strong drink, when taken to excess, is a poison, which does not only endanger the health of the body, but is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Or would you consent, if for their sport and diversion your companions were to request you to cut off your right hand, or pluck out your right eye? But this would be a far less sacrifice, than to do that, which, if unrepented of, may cast you, although having two hands or two eyes, into that fire which never shall be quenched.

And here I must address a few words to those, who thus urge, and almost compel, their companions or their guests, to drink—in direct opposition to the precept of Solomon—*for drunkenness and not for strength*^a. Ought you not to shudder at the idea of urging a fellow creature to do that, which of all things is most hurtful to him—TO SIN AGAINST GOD? Ought you not to tremble at the idea, of taking upon yourself the office of the devil, at the idea of becoming a TEMPTER, of making yourself the devil's minister and servant in doing his work of ruining men's souls? *Woe unto him*, says the prophet, *that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also.—Thou art filled with shame for glory*^b. If this is done from trusting to the superior strength of your own head, there is another woe still reserved for you; *Woe unto them*, says Isaiah, *who are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink*^c.

Let me then intreat you, to be ever on your guard against this shameful and destructive sin of drunkenness. If you have in any degree given way to it, lament your weakness with shame and deep humility, and resolve and pray for God's grace that you may be guilty of it no more. *The time past of your life may well suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, wherein ye walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries*^d. And, for the time to come, endeavour to do works meet for repentance, and to pursue such a line of conduct as

^a Eccles. x. 17.^b Hab. ii. 15.^c Isaiah v. 22.^d 1 Pet. iv. 3.

naturally springs from a real and lively faith in Jesus Christ. *Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness^a.* Recollect that drunkenness is one of the works of darkness, one of the works of the flesh, which are utterly inconsistent with the Christian character. Recollect that it degrades and sinks a man to the level—indeed *below* the level—of a brute. Recollect that drunkenness may occasion, not only all kinds of calamity in this life, but transgressions and crimes, at the bare idea of which you would in your sober senses shudder; and that it exposes you to eternal perdition in the world to come;—for we are assured that *drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God^b.* Watch and pray, therefore, against this dangerous, this disgraceful sin. *Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour^c.* Let us who are of the day be sober^d. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof^e.

^a Luke xxi. 34.^b Gal. v. 21. and 1 Cor. vi. 10.^c 1 Peter v. 8.^d 1 Thess. v. 6.^e Rom. xiii. 14.

*Prayer.**For Temperance.*

O Almighty God and gracious Father of men and angels, who openest thy hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness, teach me to use thy creatures soberly and temperately, that I may not by excess make the temptations of the enemy to prevail against me, or my spirit unapt for the performance of my duty, or my body unhealthy, or my affections sensual and unholy. O my God, never suffer that the blessings which thou givest me, may either minister to sin or sickness, but to health and holiness and thanksgiving, that I may cheerfully and diligently serve thee, and be accounted worthy through thy grace to be admitted to thy table hereafter at the marriage supper of the Lamb, thy Son Jesus Christ, in whose name we beseech thee to hear our prayers.

Texts to be committed to memory.

Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness. *Rom. xiii. 13.*

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit. *Eph. v. 18.*

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? they that tarry long at the wine. *Prov. xxiii. 29.*

Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares. *Luke xxi. 34.*

Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God. *1 Cor. vi. 10.*

Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also. Thou art filled with shame for glory. *Hab. ii. 15.*

Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. *Isa. v. 22.*

The time past of your life may well suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, wherein ye walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banqueting, and abominable idolatries. *1 Pet. iv. 3.*

Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. *1 Pet. v. 8.*

SERMON VI.

CHASTITY.

1 PET. ii. 11.

Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

THERE is hardly any sin against which young men more require to be warned, than the very dangerous—the *deadly*—sin of fornication. At the same time it is difficult to write or to speak of this sin, or indeed even to name it, without some offence, some violation of purity. *It is a shame*, says St. Paul, *even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret**.

Still, where the evil is so great and so prevalent, some attempt must be made to check it. The admonition, the warning against it *must* be given. Young men must not be suffered to be guilty of this sin, without being told, of the sad consequences which it entails both in this world and the next, of the awful danger to which it exposes them.

Young people are strongly urged to the commission of this sin by their natural appetites and

* Ephes. v. 12.

passions, and they derive a sort of encouragement from its shameful prevalence, and from the numbers of the guilty. They perhaps hear it treated, by unthinking people, as an offence attended with little danger;—perhaps as no offence at all. Too often do we see young women, who ought to be bowed to the earth, with sorrow for having offended God, and with shame and confusion of face from a sense of sin and disgrace, come boldly and unblushingly forward, and speak of their crime as a mere *misfortune or accident*. Instead of charging themselves, as they ought to do, with a shameful and crying sin, they lay it to the charge of *fortune*. The partners of their guilt are often still less abashed. Instead of being penetrated with sorrow and remorse, they sometimes seem almost to be proud of—almost to glory in—their transgressions. *Were they ashamed*, says the Prophet, *when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush*^b. A sad pitch of hardened profligacy. Alas! my friends, it is not in this light unthinking way that this offence should be treated. However slightly it may be spoken of in an evil world, whatever excuses you may yourselves be disposed to plead, such as the violence of temptation, the strength of your passion and appetites, yet be not misled by them. *Be not deceived with vain words; for it is because of these things*—it is because of this very sin—that *the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience*^c.

^b Jer. vi. 15.^c Ephes. v. 5, 6.

You are NOT to give way to your appetites and passions, like brute beasts that have no understanding, but must keep them under the control of reason and religion. The God who made you, knows what your passions and appetites are, and he enjoins you thus to control them, and is ready to give you his grace to assist you in doing so. *This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication* ^d.

The Scriptures are full of warnings against this fatal sin, and repeatedly point out the awful punishment which awaits it.

In the text, St. Peter exhorts you to *abstain from fleshly lusts*. And why does he exhort you to this? Because they WAR AGAINST THE SOUL. They *war against the soul*, both here and hereafter. They war against the soul *here*, by polluting and defiling it*, by unfitting it for the service of God, for prayer, and for all religious thoughts and offices;—by rendering it earthly and sensual. And they war against the soul *hereafter*, by exposing it to everlasting ruin in the world to come. We are assured by St. Paul in several places, that fornication—in common language the sin of whoredom—is one of those sins which will exclude from the kingdom of God those who are guilty of it. *I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things—such things as fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness—shall not—cannot—inheritor the kingdom of God* ^e. And again to the Ephesians,

^d 1 Thess. iv. 3.

^e Matt. xv. 19, 20.

^f Gal. v. 21.

For this ye know—every one who has any knowledge at all of religion *must know this—this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*^a. And if they are not received into that kingdom, what remains for them, but to be cast into that outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth?

We are told in Scripture, that we stand in need of the assistance of the Holy Spirit in order to be saved; *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. But those who give way to fleshly lusts, who commit this sin of fornication, do what they can to drive the Holy Spirit from them. St. Paul argues against this sin, on this very ground. *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God*^b? *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy*^c.

We all of us profess to rest our hope of salvation upon the redemption effected by the death of Jesus Christ; for it is in Him that *we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and there is none other name given among men whereby we may be saved*. But if we are thus redeemed, thus *bought by Christ*, we *belong to him*, and not to ourselves. St. Paul, in the same chapter, argues against the sin of unchastity from this consideration. *Know ye not that your bodies are*

^a Ephes. v. 5.

^b 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19.

^c 1 Cor. iii. 17.

the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. And then a little after, Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

The sin of fornication is contrary to the whole spirit and character of the Christian religion. Those who are admitted into the fellowship of that religion, are called upon solemnly to renounce all the sinful lusts of the flesh, especially those lusts of which we have been speaking. *Fornication*, says St. Paul, *and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you as becometh saints*^k—that is, as becometh Christians, as becometh men who have been dedicated to God by baptism. Again to the Colossians, *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence; for which things' sake, he add's, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience*^l. The wrath of God will come on them in the sentence of condemnation;—for, as we read in several places, that those who commit these sins shall not inherit the kingdom of God, will not go to heaven; so we find in the book of Revelation, that they will *have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*^m.

This awful condemnation, it is true, may in this, as in every other instance, be avoided, through faith in the atonement of Christ, upon the sincere repentance

^k Ephes. v. 3.

^l Coloss. iii. 5. 6.

^m Rev. xxi. 8.

of the offender. That repentance however, in order to be real and accepted, must be made up of deep shame and confusion of face, of heartfelt sorrow and contrition of spirit, attended with hatred of sin, and with a real change, a real amendment, of heart and life. How little we see of such repentance as this, how utterly inconsistent it is with that light, thoughtless, shameless behaviour, which I have already spoken of, you need not to be told. I must add too, that though sins of this nature, as well as all other sins, may be blotted out, through faith in the blood of Christ, upon the deep repentance of the sinner, yet that they are apt to render repentance peculiarly difficult. This difficulty arises, not only from the remembrance of the guilty pleasure which attended them, but because they have, perhaps more than most other sins, a tendency to brutalize the soul, and make it less fit for spiritual thoughts and considerations. This, as I have already said, is one of the ways in which fleshly lusts *war against the soul*. They indispose it for prayer and all religious thoughts and exercises. In short, they make repentance necessary, and at the same time render it peculiarly difficult to repent.

And here I would add another consideration, which is, that the sin of which I have been speaking, is not committed by *one person alone*. Therefore, even supposing that through the grace and mercy of God, he, who has in this way offended, is brought to repentance, yet still his repentance cannot save from ruin the partner of his guilt. His own sin may, upon

his repentance, be blotted out, but the partner of his crime is perhaps never induced to repent, and he must ever bear in his mind the dreadful thought, that in order to gratify his fleshly lust, he has been accessary to the ETERNAL RUIN of a fellow-creature.

In comparison with the awful sufferings to be endured in the world to come, the evil consequences of unchastity in this world are but as nothing. In themselves, however, they are most lamentable, such as no man of common sense or common feeling would willingly occasion. Reflect, that if you seduce into sin a young woman who hitherto was innocent, you bring upon her character a blot, a stain, which no time can wash away. You make her to become a grief and a reproach to her parents and relations, perhaps an outcast from society. You probably deprive her in great measure of the means of procuring a livelihood, and make her to become a degraded being, the object of the pity, perhaps of the scorn, of her neighbours. Never suffer your fleshly lusts so far to prevail over you, as to induce you to occasion such great, such irreparable misery. Possibly some men may be disposed to reply, that they would upon no account seduce one who had hitherto been innocent, and that they offend only with those abandoned and profligate women, who have long since been corrupted, and who make a trade and profession of sin. But do you, not see, that you thus encourage them to go on in that evil and shameful course of life? That you make their repentance, their turning to God, more difficult?

And reflect on the evil you bring on yourself, the injury you may do to your own character—your substance—your health—your immortal soul. We often see, that by such women, many men, according to the observation of Solomonⁿ, are brought to absolute want; often they contract a sore disease, the taint and corruption of which descends to their children and their children's children. And above all, they acquire a habit of that sin, which wars against the soul, which drowns men's souls in destruction and perdition. To such I should repeat the advice of Solomon. *Remove thy ways far from the evil woman, and come not nigh the door of her house^o. He that goeth after her, goeth as an ox to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart—the dart of disease—strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. Let not thine heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death^p.* HER HOUSE IS THE WAY TO HELL; for the sin of fornication, though in some cases more sinful than in others, does in every case, if died in without repentance, expose a man to *the vengeance of eternal fire*.

Shun carefully, therefore, every approach to this most dangerous sin. Keep as much as possible out of the way of temptation, and be on your guard against the very first beginnings of unchastity, against every thing that is likely to lead you into it. Avoid reading such books or songs, or having or looking at

ⁿ Prov. vi. 26.^o Prov. v. 8.^p Prov. vii. 22, 23, 27.

such prints or pictures, as are calculated to excite impure desires and unchaste thoughts. Especially keep away from all conversation that has this tendency, and from the society of such men as indulge in such conversation. *Let no corrupt communication*, says St. Paul, *proceed out of your mouth*¹. Such corrupt communication will grieve the *Holy Spirit of God*, and perhaps induce him altogether to leave you. *Neither filthiness*, soon after continues the apostle, *nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient*—not suitable to, but utterly unworthy of, the character of a Christian. After all our care, the appetites and desires of our corrupted nature will still be but too headstrong and rebellious. It is madness to add to their strength by such incentives as I have alluded to, by permitting our eyes to see, or our ears to hear, any thing which is calculated to add fuel to the flame. *Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?*² These sins are best avoided by avoiding the first beginnings of them. Every sinful indulgence you allow yourselves, every improper liberty which you take, will be likely to lead you on, with increasing violence, to something more and more criminal.

Remember the solemn words of our Saviour, *I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*³. Pray therefore earnestly to God that He would turn away your eyes lest they behold vanity, and

¹ Eph. iv. 29. and v. 4.

² Prov. vi. 27, 28.

³ Matt. v. 28.

resolve like holy Job to *make a covenant with your eyes, that they shall not look on any forbidden object*[†].

Above all, in this instance especially, *keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life*[‡]. Out of the heart proceeds this sin, together with the other sins which defile a man. The *pure in heart are they that shall see God*. Endeavour therefore to keep your hearts pure from all unchaste thoughts and imaginations. Endeavour, if such thoughts obtain admittance, to drive them from you. And fervently beseech Almighty God to create in you a new and pure heart, and to renew a right spirit within you.

The Prayer.

Great and glorious God, thou art a Being of infinite holiness, and hast declared thy abhorrence of all impurity. I beseech thee to give me true sorrow and contrition of heart, for that I am so far from that purity and holiness which thou requirest, and which is necessary to make me meet for the joys of Heaven. I beseech thee for the sake of thy dear Son to pardon all the impure thoughts, desires, and purposes, which I have ever entertained in my mind, and all the unchaste actions of my life. O cleanse my soul from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and grant that my body may be a holy temple, fit for thy Holy Spirit to dwell in. Enable me to subdue all fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Create in me a clean heart,

[†] Job xxxi. 1.

[‡] Prov. iv. 23.

and renew a right spirit within me. Put thy fear into my heart, and cause in my soul a stedfast resolution against all unchastity. Hear me, O Lord, for thy mercy's sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Texts to be committed to memory.

Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. 1 *Pet.* ii. 11.

Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? yea they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush. *Jer.* vi. 15.

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. *Eph.* v. 6.

This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication. 1 *Thess.* iv. 3.

I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. *Gal.* v. 21.

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. *Eph.* v. 5.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. 1 *Cor.* iii. 16, 17.

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and

make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.
1 *Cor.* vi. 15.

Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. *Eph.* v. 3.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence; for which things' sake, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience. *Coloss.* iii. 5, 6.

Remove thy ways far from the evil woman, and come not nigh the door of her house. *Prov.* v. 8.

He that goeth after her, goeth as an ox to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. Let not thine heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. *Prov.* v. 22, 23, 27.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. *Eph.* iv. 29.

SERMON VII.

YOUNG MEN EXHORTED TO FRUGALITY AND
FORESIGHT.

PROV. vi. 6, 7, 8.

Go to the ant, thou sluggard ; consider her ways, and be wise : which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

IT is of great importance to us all, that we should acquire the habit of carrying our view forward to the state upon which we shall enter after death, and of considering, how our happiness in that state, will be affected by the conduct which we maintain here. *Remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss.* And with respect to the things of this life also, we shall do well to look forward a little, and to take no step, not to say or do any thing of importance, without reflecting upon its consequences, upon the manner in which it may affect the future *temporal* welfare either of ourselves or of others.

Young men are too apt to neglect this *looking forward*. They are too apt to act from sudden im-

pulse, from the feeling of the moment. Something strongly excites their passions or appetites, and they are hurried by them into some action, or into a line of conduct, which may have an unkindly influence upon all their life afterwards. Present gratification, present pleasure, is apt to be their great object, and they will not consider whether indulging in pleasure *now*, may not be the occasion of discomfort, of want, and suffering, as they advance in years.

As, when assailed by difficulties or distresses of any description, we do well to use our utmost exertions to overcome or to remove them, humbly relying, from the success of those exertions, upon the good providence of God, so we do well, to look forward to those wants which in the common course of things are likely to come upon us hereafter, and to provide against them by timely prudence.

I am not in the slightest degree recommending an excessive carefulness and over-anxiety about the future supply of our temporal necessities. I well know how strongly we are cautioned in the Scriptures against such over-anxiety, how we are admonished *to cast all our care upon God, as upon one who careth for us*. But I also know, that both the express words, and the whole spirit of Scripture, require us, both in temporal and in spiritual things, to do what we can for ourselves, in humble reliance upon the help of the Almighty. To take no care for ourselves, to use no exertions of our own, is rather tempting the providence of God instead of trusting to him. If we depend upon

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the industry and exertions of others for the supply of those wants, which with common care and prudence we might have avoided or supplied ourselves, we are guilty of injustice towards them, are guilty of a kind of dishonesty which we ought to be ashamed of. It is in this spirit that St. Paul says, that *if any would not work, neither should he eat*: and again, *We command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread*^a:—*their own bread*—bread earned by their own labour, their own exertions. So again to the Ephesians, *Rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*^b.

That provident forecast which tends to prevent the evils arising from poverty, and to save a man from the pain of feeling himself dependent upon the assistance of others, is strongly recommended in the writings of Solomon. He enforces his recommendation by referring us to the industry and foresight of the ant. *Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provides her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.* And again, *There be four things which are little upon earth, but they are exceeding wise. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer*^c. As the ant, taught by the instinct implanted in her by the God of nature, diligently labours in the summer, to pro-

^a 2 Thess. iii. 10, 12.

^b Eph. iv. 28.

^c Prov. xxx. 24, 25.

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vide a sufficiency of food, against that season when the inclemency of the weather will prevent her from leaving her cell; so ought those men, who, in the vigour of youth, are able to earn more than is absolutely necessary for their subsistence, constantly to lay by some small portion of their earnings, which, by degrees, will amount to such a sum, as will maintain them in the time of sickness and old age, without being a burden to others.

Labouring men, who have families of many young children to provide for, are, of course, unable to comply with this advice. Every penny that they can earn is required by their necessities continually pressing upon them. But single men, engaged in active employment, as labourers, or servants, or journeymen in various trades, should imitate the industry and foresight of the ant, and take every opportunity of laying up something against the time of old age. Those who are thus circumstanced, ought to form the manly resolution, to depend, *under Providence*, on their own exertions alone for subsistence, and should feel ashamed, if they can any how avoid it, of looking forward to support from parish relief.

A young man, who is destitute of proper feeling and right principles, may perhaps be disposed to say in his heart, that he will not trouble himself to lay by any part of his earnings, since the parish will always be bound to maintain him;—that he will enjoy himself while he can, and spend his money in rioting

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and drunkenness. This is the case, when he earns good wages. Sometimes he probably finds it difficult to procure employment; and it is natural that it should be so. The occupiers of land *must* have their work done by somebody, but they naturally prefer having it done by a sober industrious man, who will do a fair day's work for his money, rather than by one of idle and dissipated habits, whose behaviour seems to shew that he neither fears God, nor regards man.

Under the influence of strong drink, or merely to gratify his carnal lusts and appetites, a man of such thoughtless dissipated character, perhaps, leads a young woman into wickedness; and then,—to avoid the expense of maintaining the offspring of such illicit connexion, or perhaps under the idea that he shall more easily force the parish to find him work,—marries her. Nothing however is provided beforehand. He has no house into which to put his wife; no household goods or household comforts of any description. He applies to the overseer for *a place to be in*, and is probably thrust into a work-house, or into a parish-house already occupied by one or more families. He is an annoyance to them, and they are an annoyance to him. The disquiet and discomfort of such a home irritates and sours his temper, and induces him to continue his former bad habit of drinking at the public house. The money, which ought to provide food for his wife and family, is squandered *there*. His children are neglected and in rags, and he becomes a de-

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graded parish pauper, perhaps for the remainder of his days. At the same time the farmers—the principal payers of the poor-rates—who *rise early and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness*, in order to maintain their station in society, many of whom too find it difficult to support their own families in comfort, naturally feel indignant at being obliged to contribute to the maintenance of a man, who, if he had been prudent and industrious, might have maintained himself; and who, after all, spends at the ale-house good part of that money, which is wrung from them. This occasions an unkindly feeling, a spirit of hostility, between them, which is injurious to the interests, the happiness, and the character of both.

Do not misunderstand me. I by no means wish to throw any blame whatever, or any sort of censure, upon those, who from unavoidable calamity, or who, without fault of their own, are by age, or infirmities, or by the number of their children, reduced to have recourse to parish relief. But I wish young men to feel, that it is inconsistent with real manliness and independence of character, indeed inconsistent with common honesty, to become a burden to a parish, when by industry and prudence they might have done without it. In fact, parish relief was not intended for *them*. It was intended for the aged and the infirm, and the cripple, and for all who are really unable to help themselves. It was never intended to encourage the strong and active in habits of carelessness and improvidence.

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In short, your own good sense must tell you, that he who idly squanders his earnings, under the idea that the parish must provide for him, is guilty of positive dishonesty. He is guilty of dishonestly robbing those, from whose pockets the parish funds are drawn, and who often find it very difficult to find money to pay the poor's rate. He is guilty too of injuring the *really* necessitous poor, the supply of whose wants is likely to be rendered less ample, in consequence of the drain upon the parish funds occasioned by his want of honest and manly principle.

Do not suppose that any thing which I have advanced, is meant to dissuade or to discourage young men from marrying. I know that *marriage is honourable in all and the bed undefiled*. I know that marriage was instituted, as for other reasons, so especially "for the mutual society help and comfort that the one ought to have in the other, both in prosperity" and adversity. A young man may well look forward to his union with a sensible and religious young woman, as to that which is to constitute his principal solace and enjoyment in his journey through life. But then marriage, in order to be productive of happiness, must be entered into "reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God." It must not be *hastily* engaged in, "unadvisedly, lightly, and wantonly, merely to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding."

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Let a young man look forward to a suitable marriage if he pleases. But then he should provide something beforehand. Let him wait a few years, till he has got a little forward in the world; and let him not quietly submit to the idea, of reducing a decent and respectable young woman, and the children which she may bear to him, to a state of ragged and squalid pauperism. In short, let him imitate the foresight and industry of the ant, let him *consider her ways, and be wise.*

Again; let not any one so far misunderstand me, as to suppose that I am recommending a penurious disposition. I would wish a young man to be ready, on fit occasions, to *give to him that needeth.* The best mode in which young persons of either sex can dispose of their spare money is, in relieving the necessities of their aged parents, thus making some little return—*requiting* them, as the Scriptures speak—for their watchful care of them during childhood.

Neither should they suffer my exhortation to them to imitate the foresight and frugality of the ant, to prevent them from relieving the real distress of their fellow-creatures. This is one of the modes of laying up treasure in heaven, recommended by our blessed Lord himself. The money which I advise them to lay up, is not the money that would be devoted either to their parents, or to well-judged charity, but that which would be spent in gratifying their own vanity or their own appetites—in idle amusements—perhaps in gaming—perhaps in drunkenness.

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Possibly some persons may be disposed to think, that in this discourse, there has been little mention of religion properly so called. But it will hardly be denied, that what I have said has been strictly consonant with the passage of Scripture which I have selected as my text, and surely the interests of religion are nearly interested in it. It is the business of religion to check the prevalence of sin; and to how many sins are those young men, who have acquired no habits of frugality and foresight, liable to be tempted! St. Paul expressly calls our attention to *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are of good report**. Now that man does not properly attend either to *honesty*, or *justice*, or *good report*, who idly squanders his money *now*, with the intention of forcing others to maintain him *hereafter*, who depends upon receiving from a parish that maintenance, which he might derive from his own industry. Let me then exhort all those, who have the power to comply with my exhortation, to resolve to render and to keep themselves independent, as far as they can. *Go to the ant, consider her ways, and be wise; who having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.* She has no guide, overseer, or ruler, but acts from her own instinctive sagacity, implanted in her by the Almighty. And so you, if you comply with my advice, will act entirely of your own

* Philip. iv. 8.

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free-will; it is left entirely to your own choice; and the good effects of so acting you will owe, under the blessing of Providence, to your own exertions, frugality, and forecast.

Prayer.

O heavenly Father, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, enable me, in humble reliance on thy care and protection, to provide bread to eat, and raiment to put on, for myself and those belonging to me. Make me diligent and frugal, and sober, and temperate in all things. Grant, if it be thy good pleasure, that I may never become a burden to others for the supply of my bodily wants, but may depend for such supply upon the labour of my own hands, and on thy good Providence. And while, in dutiful submission to thy will, I labour for the meat that perisheth, grant that I may never forget to seek for that meat which endureth unto life everlasting, but amidst all the labours, and toil, and distresses of this world, may always set my heart and affections on things in heaven, and may in the first place seek thy kingdom and thy righteousness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Texts to be committed to memory.

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. *Prov. vi. 6, 7, 8.*

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There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer. *Prov. xxx. 24, 25.*

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. *2 Thess. iii. 10, 12.*

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. *Eph. iv. 28.*

If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. *1 Tim. v. 8.*

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. *Phil. iv. 8.*

DEVOTIONS FOR YOUNG MEN.

Devotions for the Morning.

Let a young man, if he has time and opportunity, read the 139th Psalm, and then the Lesson out of the New Testament, appointed for the Morning Service, first using the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent. Then the following Prayer.

O Almighty God, who art always to be feared, and always to be praised, I give thee humble thanks for that thou hast brought me safely to the beginning of this day. Protect me in it, I beseech thee, by thy good Providence. Let not the health and vigour of my youth render me forgetful of thy watchful care over me; but make me truly sensible, that through thee I have been holden up ever since I was born, and that therefore my praise should be always of thee. Suppress in me all those sensual inclinations, and correct that levity and wantonness to which my time of life is subject; and implant in me, O Lord, such a constant regard to thy holy will, as may influence all my actions from this moment to the end of my life.

Particularly, O gracious Father, give me wisdom from above, that I may pursue the proper business of my calling with diligence, and uncorrupted integrity. Open mine eyes to discern, and strengthen my heart to oppose, the manifold temptations that daily surround me. Let neither pleasure nor profit, persuasion nor example, betray me into compliance with the wicked customs and practices of the world; but grant, that I may so set thee, thy presence and

thy pleasure, always before me, that I may continue in thy fear, and walk in thy commandments, all the day long. Give me the constant help of thy Holy Spirit, and evermore increase and strengthen my faith in thy blessed Son Jesus Christ, in whose name I beseech thee to hear my prayer.

Our Father, &c.

Defend, O Lord, me thy servant with thy heavenly grace, that I may continue thine for ever; and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit, more and more, until I come to thine everlasting kingdom. Amen.

Devotions for the Evening.

If you have time, read the 19th or the 145th Psalm; then the New Testament Lesson for the Evening, using the Collect as in the Morning; then the following Prayer.

O Almighty God, and merciful Father, who willingly hearest the prayers of all that call upon thee in faith, I humbly beseech thee, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to pardon whatsoever thou hast seen amiss this day in my thoughts, words, or actions. [*Here endeavour to recollect, and mention, any sins or failings into which you have fallen during the day.*] Assist me for the time to come with thy heavenly grace, that I may make it my constant endeavour to resist and conquer every evil inclination within me, and every temptation from without.

O blessed Lord, that neither slumberest nor sleepest, be pleased in mercy to watch over me this night. Keep me by thy power from all sin, and defend me from all dangers. Grant me moderate

and refreshing sleep, such as may fit me for the duties of the day following. And, Lord, make me ever mindful of that time, when I shall lie down in the dust; and because I know neither the day nor the hour of my Master's coming, grant me grace that I may be always ready, that I may never live in such a state, as I shall fear to die in; but that whether I live, I may live unto the Lord; or whether I die, I may die unto the Lord; so that living and dying I may be thine, through Jesus Christ. Accept of my humblest praise and thanksgiving, O Lord, for all the goodness thou hast this day shewed me, but above all for the redemption of mankind by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of present grace, and for the hope of future glory. Enable me to shew my thankfulness by living in all things according to thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Father, &c.

It is very desirable that young persons should acquire the habit of committing to memory—of learning by heart—such portions of Scripture as are likely to be most applicable to their own circumstances, their own temporal and spiritual conditions. Such passages for instance as the 53d chapter of Isaiah, the Sermon on the Mount, the 12th and 13th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, 1 Cor. xiii. Gal. v. 16—26. Eph. ii. and iv. v. vi. Let them also learn by heart many of the Psalms, particularly Psalm i. viii. xv. xix. xxiii. xxvi. xxvii. li. xc. ciii. civ. cvii. cxix. This practice would be attended with much advantage and comfort, as at all other times, so especially, if they should ever be laid upon the bed of sickness.

See Scripture Extracts, and Selection from the Psalms to be learnt by heart. Rivingtons.

A MORNING HYMN.

- 1 AWAKE, my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run ;
Shake off dull sloth, and early rise
To pay thy morning sacrifice.
- 2 Redeem thy mispent time that's past,
Live this day as if 'twere thy last ;
Improve thy talents with due care ;
For the Great Day thyself prepare.
- 3 In conversation be sincere,
Keep conscience, as the noon-day, clear :
Think how all-seeing God thy ways,
And all thy secret thoughts, surveys.
- 4 Wake, and lift up thyself, my heart,
And with the Angels bear thy part ;
Who all night long unwearied sing
High praise to the eternal King.
- 5 All praise to Thee, who safe hast kept,
And hast refreshed me, whilst I slept :
Grant, Lord ! when I from death shall wake,
I may of endless life partake.
- 6 Lord, I my vows to thee renew,
Disperse my sins as morning dew ;
Guard my first springs of thought and will,
And with thyself my spirit fill.

- 7 Direct, control, suggest, this day,
 All I design, or do, or say ;
 That all my powers with all their might
 In thy sole glory may unite.
- 8 Praise God, from whom all blessings flow ;
 Praise Him, all creatures here below ;
 Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host ;
 Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

EVENING HYMN.

- 1 GLORY to Thee, my God, this night,
 For all the blessings of the light ;
 Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,
 Beneath thine own Almighty wings.
- 2 Forgive me, Lord, for thy dear Son,
 The ills, which I this day have done ;
 That with the world, myself, and thee,
 I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.
- 3 Teach me to live, that I may dread
 The grave as little as my bed ;
 Teach me to die, that so I may
 With joy behold the Judgment Day,
- 4 O may my soul on thee repose,
 And may sweet sleep mine eye-lids close ;
 Sleep, that may me more active make,
 To serve my God, when I awake.

Lift up your soul in praise to Heaven,
 Whence every precious gift is given ;
 And, thankful for the mercy, show
 Love to your fellow-men below.

Do woes afflict ? lift up your soul
 To Him, who bids the thunder roll ;
 And fearless brave the stormy hour,
 Secure in His protecting pow'r,
 Who sends distress your faith to try,
 And your heart to purify.

Abroad, at home ; in weal, in woe ;
 That service, which to heav'n you owe,
 That bounden service duly pay,
 And God shall be your strength alway.

He only to the heart can give
 Peace and true pleasure, while you live ;
 He only, when you yield your breath,
 Can guide you through the vale of death :
 He can, He will, from out the dust
 Raise the blest spirits of the just ;
 Heal every wound ; hush every fear ;
 From every eye wipe every tear ;
 And place them, where distress is o'er,
 And pleasures dwell for evermore.

THE END.





